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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews problems in the sheltered workshop concept and proposes a change of focus in the provision of occupational life preparatory services for individuals with severe disabilities. Among problems cited are a lack of efficient production and training technologies, a lack of trained community placement personnel, and a general lack of tasks or activities for work. In addition, the paper asserts that sheltered workshops have not placed enough emphasis on competitive employment nor have they expressed much interest in working with severely disabled persons. A transition approach is advocated which defines environmentally based programming on a cluster analysis of actual work roles. Such an approach produces outcomes in career development, (including awareness, exploration, and self assessment), prevocational areas (such as work habits and employability skills), and vocational areas (work skills and behavior). (CL)

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Career Vocational Programming for the Severely Handicapped Individual

Robert A. Stodden

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Introduction

In past years, the primary resources available to parents and professionals concerned with preparation needs of persons with severe disabilities have been within the framework of separate and sheltered programming vehicles. Planning for sheltered programming efforts was initiated by parents and concerned individuals with the hope of providing some structure to the disabled person's environmental time/space; that space usually attributed to participation within normal, social roles of value, such as, education, work, family, and religion. Such planning efforts indicate a desire by concerned individuals to structure and develop substitute vehicles for persons with disabilities, rather than apply their energy and time toward assisting and preparing disabled persons to participate within normal roles of value. The concepts inherent within separate and sheltered programming structures exist as a reflection of society's attitudes and perceptions as to the level of participation promoted for disabled persons within valued social roles.

One such substitute role vehicle structured to address the occupational/life preparation needs of persons with disabilities is the sheltered workshop. Concepts inherent within the sheltered workshop model have a long history in the United States, occupying a major portion of the habilitation/rehabilitation services provided for disabled persons (Nelson, 1971). Over the years specific programs and clientele within workshops have changed, but the conceptual model has prevailed with over 2,500 new workshops originating between 1955 and 1976 (U. S. Department of Labor, 1977). Despite this level of growth, Greenleigh Associates (1976) estimated that for every disabled person receiving such services, another nine persons were in need of some kind of occupational/life preparatory assistance.

Aided by recent thrusts of legislation and active support for the concepts of normalization and deinstitutionalization, a new advocacy has surfaced regarding the disabled person's right to equally participate within the valued roles of society. Efforts have evolved to expand the delivery of habilitation and educational services, for persons with severe disabilities toward the early and adolescent student years. This rapid surge of school based programming for the severely disabled individual during the school years seems to be bound by the same societal attitudes and perceptions that led to the design and structure of sheltered and separate adult facilities. Brown, Pumpian, Baumgart, Vandeventer, Ford, Nisbet, Schroeder, and Gruenewald (1981), indicate that while more severely disabled persons of school age are receiving a form of direct service there are several concerns related to the appropriateness of such services. Many of the following listed concerns are also reflective of adult sheltered facilities:

1. rigid and antiquated belief systems held by teachers and service providers hindering the application of efficient training and service delivery systems.
2. Use of isolated, segregated environments devoid of opportunity or experience to learn tasks reflective of independence and productivity.
3. Use of curricula that is not age appropriate, containing meaningless dead-end tasks that are rarely related to skills and behaviors necessary to approach independent and productive functioning in valued social roles.

As programming efforts for the severely disabled student continue, several attempts have been made to directly apply the sheltered workshop model within public school educational settings (Pomerantz and Marholin II,

1977; Gorman, 1978). Such efforts have included the acquisition of workshop-like contract work for practice within the academic classroom. Participation with these tasks often results in the development of dependency relationships and behavioral patterns characteristic of sheltered workshop settings. While there is evidence of a need to expand and integrate occupation/life preparatory programs into the early school years (elementary and secondary school), there appears to be reason to question the validity and efficiency of using the practices and concepts reflective of traditional sheltered programs as structured models (Gold, 1973; Pomerantz and Marholin II, 1977; Levy, Pomerantz, and Gold, 1976; Greenleigh Asso., 1975). The intent of the present effort is to expand the awareness of parents and community members, as well as, educational and habilitation personnel considering occupational/life preparatory options for persons with severe disabilities, in the following specific ways:

1. Conduct a review of historical difficulties found within the traditional sheltered workshop concept.
2. Present directions for a change of focus in the provision of occupational life preparatory services for individuals with severe disabilities.
3. Discuss options for implementation of the change of focus within educational and community settings.

Review of the Sheltered Workshop Concept

The National Association of Sheltered Workshops and Homebound Programs (1968) issued a definition of the sheltered workshop as:

> "a nonprofit rehabilitation facility utilizing individual goals, wages, supportive services, and a controlled work environment to help vocationally handicapped persons achieve or maintain their maximum potential as workers" (pg. 2)

Sheltered workshops have been structured to provide a variety of services ranging from compensatory prevocational programs, adjustment training, and extended vocational activities, to include competitive placement in work settings. A basic purpose of the sheltered workshop concept is to provide rehabilitation services and training to disabled persons, while operating within a business enterprise system. The development of the business enterprise system is to assist the structuring of real work environment demands, while accommodating the special needs of the disabled person. The workshop concept is based upon maintaining a balance between the dual entities (production and habilitation) with outcomes consisting of finished products for the business enterprise component, and partial wages and improved functioning on the part of the disabled person (Nelson, 1971; Salkind, 1971). Long term outcomes are perceived as the movement of higher functioning clients into competitive employment and others into extended work programs of a semi-sheltered nature.

Over the years, there has been no shortage of criticism concerning sheltered workshop practices, management, and overall programmatic relevancy as a service delivery system for persons with disabilities (Pomerantz and Marholin II, 1977). Beyond the management difficulties of balancing production and habilitation outcomes, sheltered workshops appear to be facing an "identity crisis" concerning the determination of what services should or can effectively be provided for which population. Several persons point out a wide range of operational concerns that have posed problems in meeting the programmatic training needs of severely disabled individuals. Some of the concerns contributing to service delivery difficulties include:

1. There is a lack of persons trained in the fields of education

and human services who also possess sound marketing, business and management skills contributing to the accountable operation of a workshop program.

2. There is a lack of use of current and efficient technologies and equipment that would not only increase production, but would provide more valid and appropriate training opportunities for disabled persons.
3. There is a general lack of tasks or activities for workshop trainees to work upon; most sheltered workshops depend upon fringe tasks from regular industries which are inconsistent, low level, repetitive and of little validity in the world of work (Gold, 1973).
4. There are inefficient and invalid training procedures applied in sheltered workshop settings which often hinder rather than contribute to the disabled person's growth and development in the world of work (DeRoo and Haralson, 1971; Gold, 1973).
5. There is a lack of trained community placement personnel in sheltered workshops indicating a lack of priority placement upon transitional movement of disabled persons into competitive employment positions.

The above mentioned concerns are often attributed to the lack of responsiveness of sheltered facilities toward the needs and demands of real community work environments. Likewise, problems inherent with the dual entity nature of the sheltered workshop tasks and the production goals tied to industrial contracts are in direct conflict with the habilitation needs of the disabled person (Greenleigh Asso., 1976). The Department of Labor (1977) indicated that funding structures operating within the sheltered workshop concept could further be contributing to the lack of

client training and movement into competitive work roles. The need to retain high level trainees to maintain high productivity coupled with the above-mentioned concerns, restricts the effectiveness of sheltered workshop programs to address the occupational life preparation needs of the disabled person. Over the years, outcomes of the sheltered workshop concept have not furthered occupational/life preparation goals of approaching independent/productive functioning for the disabled person. Some examples of those outcomes are as follows:

1. a general disinterest and lack of motivation within sheltered workshops to work with greater numbers of persons with severe disabilities. Such feelings are often associated with stereotypes of severely disabled persons as nonworkers or individuals to be maintained rather than trained.
2. a lack of motivation or understanding of how to explore and expand new programming and training options that more closely address the occupational/life development needs of a disabled person participating in roles of social and personal value (career awareness and exploratory activities, expansive range of vocational tasks and situations representative of career roles valued within society, wider use of community work settings as well as individuals and resources normally a part of those settings).
3. a lack of appropriate (validity in the world of work) workshop tasks to serve as training vehicles. Most workshop tasks are determined by the nature and length of an acquired contract, thus the tasks are often isolated in nature, very simple, repetitive and unvalued in the world of work (Gold, 1973). Workshops often take contracts when available, with emphasis upon long term

repetition, little lead and set-up time and tight completion deadlines. Most contract tasks are of a repetitive benchwork style (Department of Labor, 1977) with little or no training value.

4. a lack of emphasis upon transitional growth and movement of trainees into competitive employment roles in the community (average overall placement rate for sheltered workshops is 12% per year and only 34% of the workshops reported had a full-time placement specialist (Department of Labor, 1977)).

As parents and professionals of school aged persons with severe disabilities begin to develop occupation/life curriculum, many are viewing the tasks and structure of the sheltered workshop concept as a programmatic model. Many newly developed career/pre-vocational training programs are introducing severely disabled students to simplistic, meaningless, workshoplike activities as the core to a career readiness curriculum (Pomerantz and Marholin II, 1977; Gold and Pomerantz, 1979). Given the operational difficulties consistent with the sheltered workshop concept and concern for appropriateness in the provision of normalized, least restrictive services to disabled persons, it is necessary to encourage the exploration of alternatives in programming.

Directions for a Change of Focus

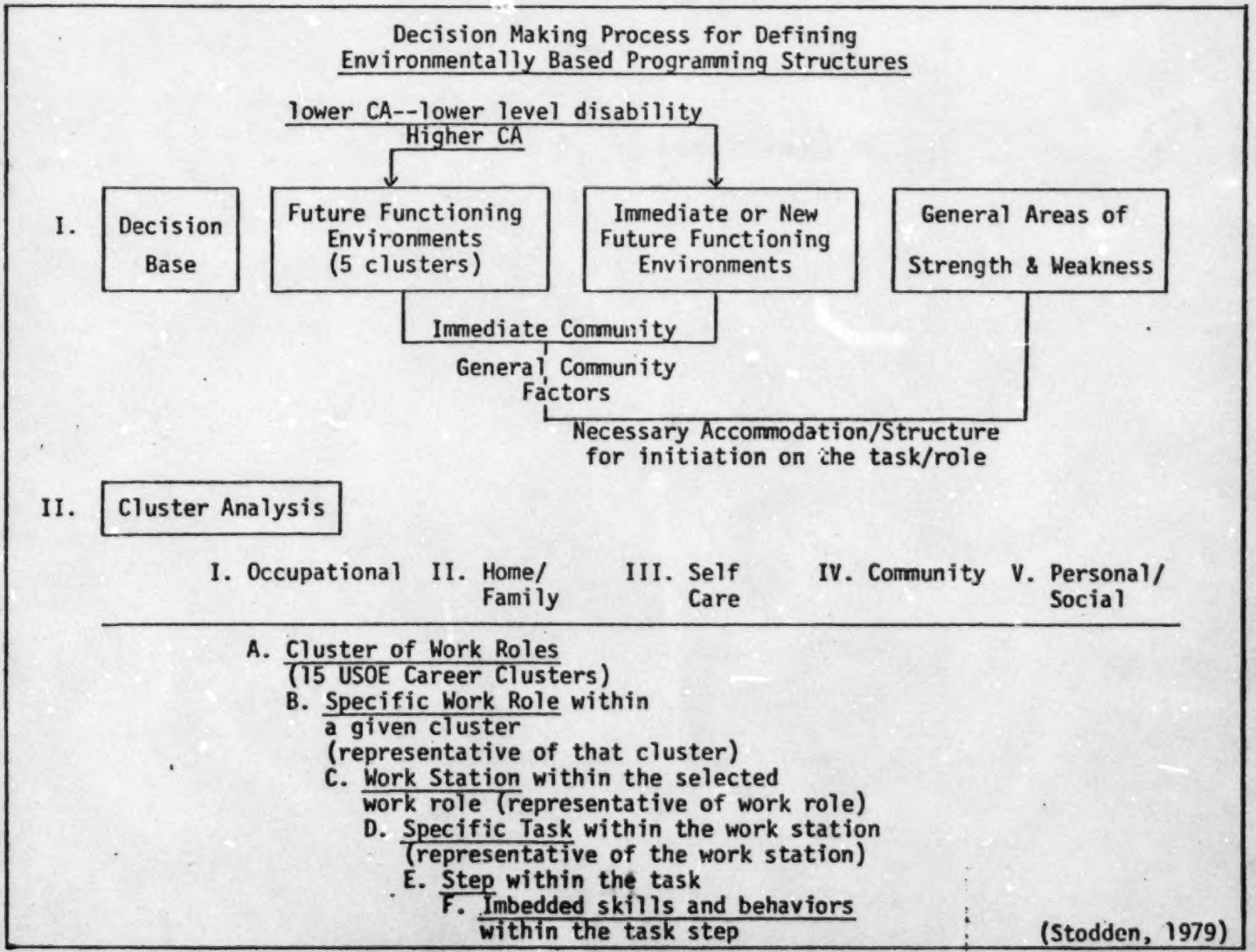
A review of past efforts to provide occupational/life preparatory services within a sheltered workshop concept reinforces the perceptions of those who feel a need to design substitute role vehicles for persons with disabilities. The operational difficulties and resulting outcomes for disabled persons have not often reflected the principles of normalization, the opportunity for increased gorwth and participation within

actual roles of value, or the development of independent and productive skills and behaviors. As alternative occupational/life preparatory programs are being structured in educational and community settings, the following considerations should be explored:

1. That participation within work roles of value and interest to the disabled person and society is a necessary approach target critical to all occupational/life programming efforts. Successful participation within valued work roles provides important human functioning structure in the form of self-identity, feelings of worth, as well as, overall motivation and purpose in life. The work role provides socially acceptable and valued space to actualize one's unique strengths and talents, and demonstrate contributory competence and usefulness to others. According to Terkel (1974) some consequences of work are: financial support, opportunities for social interaction and contribution, opportunity to actualize parts of the self and gain respect from others, opportunities to enhance skills and behaviors in areas of choice, and personal satisfaction. It would be difficult to separate the beneficial effects of work role participation from levels of participation in other environmental areas (domestic/family, personal/self care, and leisure).
2. That all occupational/life programming variables must possess content/process validity as determined by environmental and work role setting/needs within the trainee's general community of residence. To establish meaning and validity to tasks within programs for the severely disabled, it is necessary to understand the scope of training possibilities, as well as, the line of

validity drawn from a fine level breakout of skills and behaviors at a specific task step, within a complete task, making up part of a work station contributing to an actual work role. A systematic task analysis indicates that significant differences exist between the process and content of task steps in domestic/community roles and the skills and behaviors found in task steps making up a competitive work role (cooking at home vs working in the role of a short order cook; sewing your own clothes vs working in the role of an industrial seamstress). A simplified version of an environmental cluster validity process is presented in Figure I.

Figure I


Decision Making Process for Defining
Environmentally Based Programming Structures
lower CA--lower level disability
Higher CA
I.
Decision Base
Future Functioning Environments (5 clusters)
Immediate or New Future Functioning Environments
General Areas of Strength & Weakness
Immediate Community
General Community Factors
Necessary Accommodation/Structure for initiation on the task/role
II.
Cluster Analysis
I. Occupational
II. Home/ Family
III. Self Care
IV. Community
V. Personal/ Social
A. Cluster of Work Roles
(15 USOE Career Clusters)
B. Specific Work Role within a given cluster
(representative of that cluster)
C. Work Station within the selected work role (representative of work role)
D. Specific Task within the work station
(representative of the work station)
E. Step within the task
F. Imbedded skills and behaviors within the task step
(Stodden, 1979)

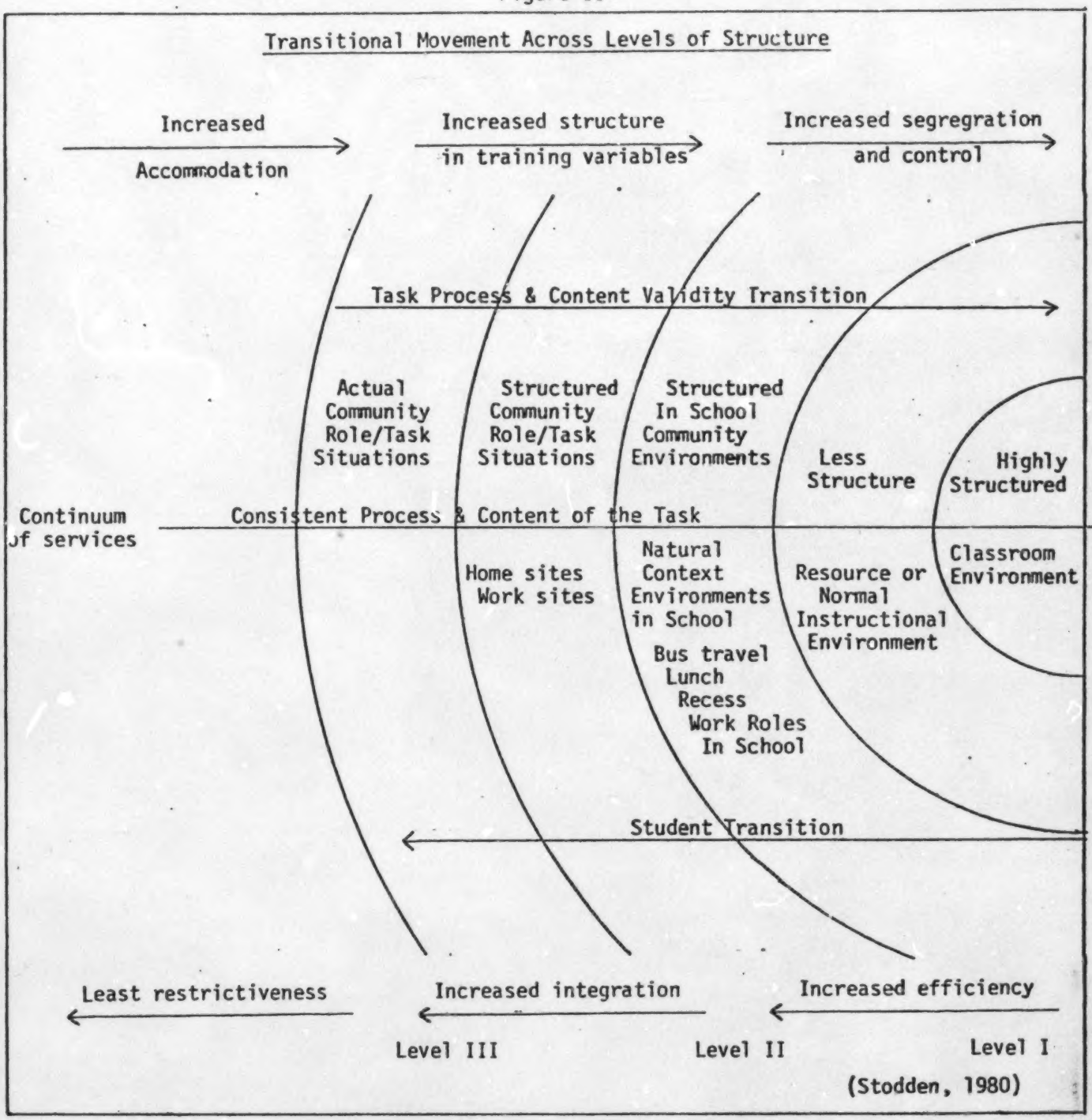
3. That the purpose of all programming efforts is to efficiently transitionalize trainees toward normalized, less restrictive functioning environments consisting of real community and work role attributes. A systematic analysis of community/work role tasks will assist the development of a transitional programming structure accountable for valid and efficient task movement. Brown, Pumpian, Baumgart, Vandeventer, Ford, Nisbet, Schroeder, Gruenewald (1981) suggest use of individualized transition plans as a check upon the functionality of ongoing programming and as a means of establishing a focus upon subsequent environments. Brown et al (1981) indicates that transitional plans would take on more meaning if severely disabled students were provided educational and related services in age appropriate public school settings with a variety of heterogenous community placements. Transitional movement on a specific task step could be the result of a number of factors; the student learned the step, an accommodation was structured for the step, task was redesigned to eliminate the step, etc.)

Gold (1976), suggests a two level transitional process and transfer of skills from different tasks and situations. He designates a criterion I level as that point when a student has established control over a behavior or has learned a skill, regardless of the setting or nature of the total task. Criterion II is defined as a point when the student demonstrates the skill or behavior in the situation where it is ultimately expected to occur (work place). Stodden (1979), proposed a three level community based transitional program design to maximize the use of actual work training variables even in the most structured settings. Trainees with severe

disabilities could enter programming at any of the three levels, determined by the degree of structure and support necessary for initiation on the task. Each of the three levels of training (Figure II) consist of the same task, situational variables, and contingencies with movement from level I (classroom training situation) toward level III (community) work environments. The degree of structure, adaptation/accommodation of the setting and task variables, and general dependence upon assistance decrease towards the demands of the actual work environment. Trainee entry and movement across the levels is determined by the efficiency and degree of training environment structure necessary for successful initiation on the task. If a trainee's performance on a task fails to progress on level II, due to a behavior that cannot be controlled or accommodated, then movement to level I, with increased control or structure on the same task might be the efficient decision related to the trainee's progress. Trainees needing less structure and assistance may begin training at level III, with structured assistance, proceeding toward eventual competitive functioning and placement within a community work role.

As indicated in Figure II, the three level transitional program design produces outcomes in three areas of growth, imbedding skills and behaviors relfective of many domains. Outcomes in career development (awareness, exploration, and assessment of self needs, interests, and abilities in relation to specific task requirements) interact with prevocational (task related skills and behaviors, work habits and employability skills) and vocational (work skills and behaviors) training areas. Occupational outcomes can be further enhanced and reinforced by training conducted in other environmental cluster areas (domestic/family, personal/self care, recreation/leisure). The transitional program design involves infusion

Figure II


Transitional Movement Across Levels of Structure
Increased
Accommodation
Increased structure
in training variables
Increased segregration
and control
Task Process & Content Validity Transition
Actual
Community
Role/Task
Situations
Structured
Community
Role/Task
Situations
Structured
In School
Community
Environments
Less
Structure
Highly
Structured
Continuum
of services
Consistent Process & Content of the Task
Home sites
Work sites
Natural
Context
Environments
in School
Bus travel
Lunch
Recess
Work Roles
In School
Resource or
Normal
Instructional
Environment
Classroom
Environment
Student Transition
Least restrictiveness
Increased integration
Increased efficiency
Level III
Level II
Level I
(Stodden, 1980)

of traditional educational and support domains (academic instructors, physical therapists, etc.) within the task curricula. These imbedded functions provides a means of accessing necessary support and structure to assist the trainee's growth at all levels of the task.

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